

HEADQUARTERS PUBLIC RELATIONS LETTER

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Recent organizational changes at Air Force Headquarters reflect an increase in recognition of public relations being a top level function. Also, with creation of a Director of Public Relations directly responsible to Secretary of the Air Force W. Stuart Symington, emphasis is being placed on building an EFFECTIVE over-all Air Force public relations program.

Mr. Stephen F. Leo, veteran of 14 years newspaper work, is new Director of Public Relations. Two divisions--Air Information, Legislative and Liaison--are under Mr. Leo.

Maj. Gen. Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., Deputy Director of Public Relations, has charge of Air Information Division, which handles headquarters public relations matters and liaison with the field.

Brig. Gen. John K. Gerhart heads Legislative and Liaison Division, which maintains contact with legislative bodies of government and with civilian organizations such as veterans groups and civic bodies.

Significance of having civilian Director of Public Relations should not be overlooked. It automatically accomplishes three objectives:

- (1) As far as the public is concerned, it makes public relations an "open book" operation, allaying fears that military is using it for "covering up" mistakes.
- (2) Provides a trained specialist of the public relations profession.
- (3) Makes positive the civilian point of view being included in the formation of Air Force policies...an absolute must if public relations program of Air Force is to be effective.

There is definite interest in public relations by high level officials ...what is happening in the field is being watched closely.

Significant to note that name "public relations" has been re-established in the Air Force...Even though the title "public information officer" is used, the function is, and always should be, public relations. The basic function of the PIO is not only to inform the public about what we are doing, but to help top officials formulate policies that will in the long run create favorable public opinion towards the Air Force.